

RIO GRANDE BOOZE WAR COSTS SCORES OF LIVES

Special Correspondence to THE NEW YORK HERALD.

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Up until the later part of September the Rio Grande River was a barometer for booze smuggling and fatalities in battles between prohibition enforcement officers and rum runners. When the water was high smuggling and fatalities decreased; when it was low there was a large increase in both.

But the present session in the campaign was not effected by the stage of the Rio Grande. Officers have thrown up their hands and are exclaiming: "What's the use?" For out of the hundreds of smugglers captured the few who have been convicted received extremely light sentences and all of those tried on charge of murdering officers have been acquitted.

Men killed and wounded at this strong point in the booze war, which has a front of 1,500 miles, have totalled more than sixty in the last year, the officers estimate, and five of those killed have been American officials—four Federal agents and one police captain. Other officers have been seriously wounded. The five officers who made the supreme sacrifice were killed during the last seven months.

At no place within the borders of the United States has the fighting between smugglers and bootleggers on one side and prohibition officers on the other been so deadly, so relentless and so colorful as around the El Paso district. When Villa's army was hammering at Juarez there were fewer shots exchanged and fewer casualties than in this war over booze. "The Island," near El Paso, has been a smugglers' headquarters, literally a Verdun that could not be taken.

Every Border Town Wet.

El Paso Wettest of All

Every American town on the border is wet, but El Paso is the wettest. Enforcement has become a farce. El Paso residents daily go to Juarez, where any of a dozen saloons will guarantee to deliver to him at his home in El Paso wine, whiskey, gin, beer, mesquite or tequila, and he doesn't have to pay until it is delivered. Taxicab stands, soft drink joints, barber shops and hundreds of small residences in El Paso have liquor for sale. This is just for the retail trade. There is a much larger traffic daily by wholesalers, who ship wet goods all over Texas and to the East and North in a tidal wave that even reaches to New York.

The Shearman case was the straw that broke the back of enforcement in the El Paso district. On March 21, Arch Wood and S. E. Beckett, Federal enforcement officers, were shot and killed at the ranch of C. P. Shearman, to which they went in search of booze. After having received a tip that twenty-one cases of liquor had been stored there, Shearman, his three sons and a ranch hand, were arrested. The father and ranch hand were tried first and they were acquitted. The sons were tried at Midland, east of here, and they also were freed. This trial was in September, after which the prohibition officers became discouraged, their raids decreased and they openly said: "What's the use?"

No chances with bands of smugglers have been taken since. At the El Paso trial of the case no fewer than 500 citizens were examined before a jury could be selected, the majority asking to be excused because of their sentiment against prohibition. Now Federal agents are citing this as strong evidence that they are fighting the public as well as bootleggers, and that the public supports the illicit dealers.

It is estimated that \$200,000 worth of liquor, bootleg prices, is brought across the Texas-Mexican border daily and the smugglers get the lion's share of this amount. Whiskey purchased at Juarez at \$40 a case is delivered on the American side for \$75 and then retailed at \$15 to \$20 a quart. This difference in price causes the smuggler to risk any chance; this profit has induced Americans to become the ring-leaders in rum running; this premium on booze resulted in the death of five officers here, to say nothing of those killed in the army of smugglers.

One Motor Car Load

Had Liquor Worth \$20,000

One automobile crossing from Mexico when stopped was found to contain 645 quarts of whiskey and 120 quarts of gin, worth \$20,000. But the amount of liquor seized is very small as compared to the amount which "escapes." In the Federal building at El Paso are stored 700 gallons of liquor captured in raids, and officers say this is only a drop of the amount which was carried across during the last twelve months.

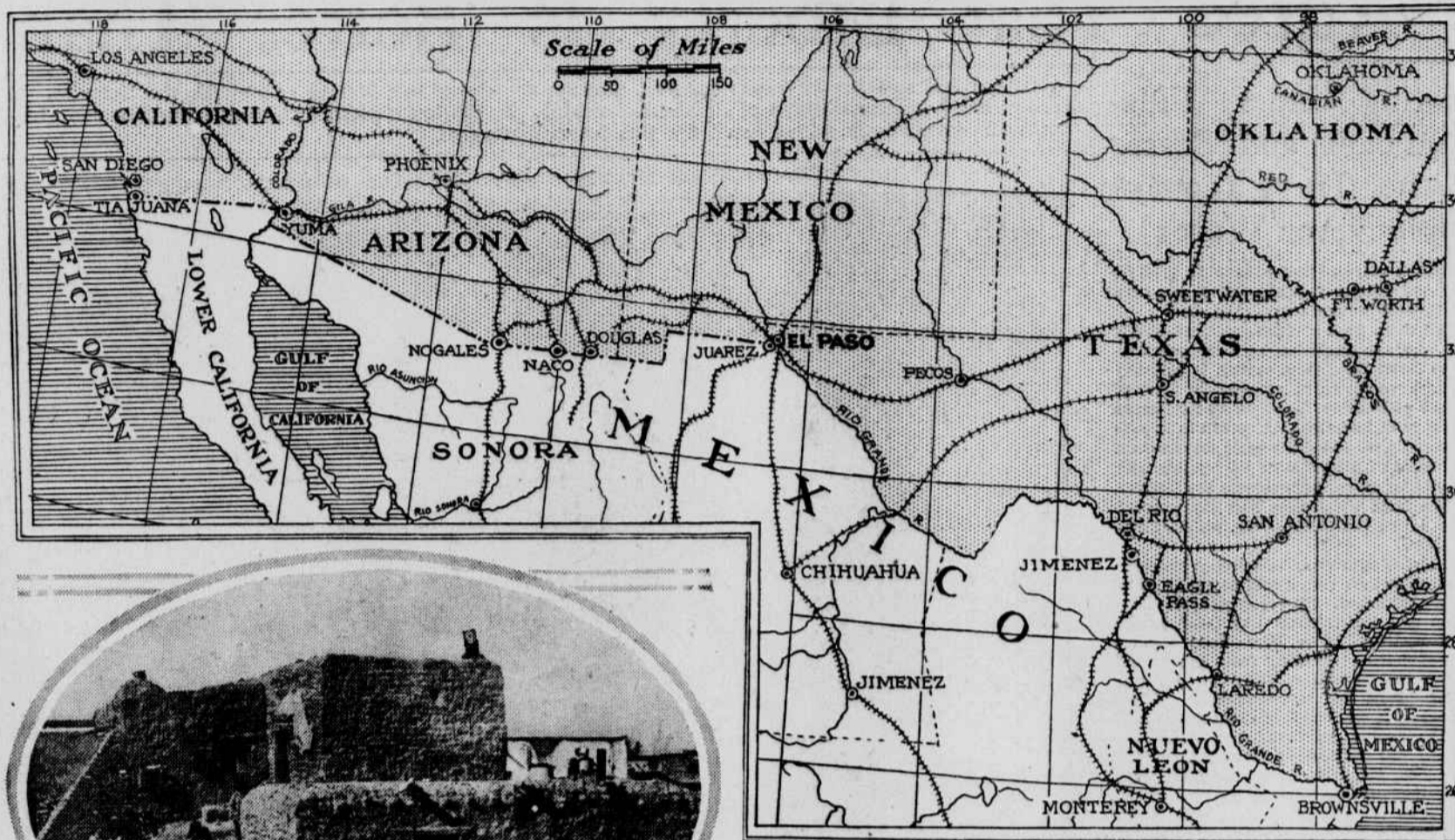
The number of men brought to trial as bootleggers, while seemingly large, does not indicate the extent of the traffic, for only five per cent. of those engaged in violating the law are caught. Nevertheless on just one day recently Judge W. R. Smith found forty-two men before him for trial as smugglers.

The bootlegging forces far outnumber the Federal agents. Until some of them were killed El Paso had nine officers in the field under James H. Shevlin as supervisor, who recently resigned. C. A. Perkins, head of the immigration force, which cooperates with the enforcement officers, says that he requires fifty additional men to watch the border in El Paso county alone and that he needs 200 men to watch the remainder of his territory, which extends from Del Rio, Texas, to the Arizona line. Customs officers, who to some extent cooperate, number only ten and are under C. C. Chase, a non-in-law of Albert B. Fall, Secretary of the Interior.

Col. R. D. Davila, commanding the Mex-

Prohibition Agents in Despair at Task of Guarding Hundreds of Miles of Easily Crossed Frontier, Especially as the Few Bootleggers Convicted Escape With Mild Sentences—Regular Battles Mark Raids on "The Island," a No Man's Land Near El Paso

Map showing the vast border over which liquor pours into the United States almost unchecked. The adobe hut below is a stronghold of bootleggers on "The Island," near El Paso, where many battles have been fought with heavy casualties.



C. C. Chase, U. S. Collector at El Paso, Tex., who faces a gigantic task to prevent smuggling of liquor over the Mexican border.

ican customs guards at Juarez, where enforcement is only a makeshift, has 150 guards for a territory extending from Presidio, Texas, to Juarez, and these men work under laws that are elastic and receive but \$150 a day to feed and clothe themselves and families and keep a horse and buy ammunition. Consequently there are charges that these Mexican guards are bought off daily for small amounts of money. The officials on the American side have had to do all the work.

Death List of Smugglers

Numbers Fifty in a Year

Smugglers have been known to carry off their dead and wounded after a raid, so their casualty list can only be estimated by the agents, who placed it at fifty, counting both dead and wounded, for the year. Here is a list of some of the known casualties since the first of the year:

January 6—Gertrude Montoya, Mexican woman, severely wounded while carrying a sack of bottled liquor across Rio Grande. The woman had been sent over by a band of smugglers, who sought to protect her from Federal officers. She was shot and killed in front of the woman as she waded. As soon as she reached the United States shore Federal officers opened fire on the smugglers, who then began a fusillade from three different directions. The battle lasted one hour, the woman was shot and her bag of whiskey confiscated. Several of the smugglers fell and the extent of their injuries was not learned.

February 16—Lenaro Lopez of Juarez, killed in battle between smugglers and American enforcement officers. Lopez belonged to the former. This fight took place on "The Island," a strip of land near El Paso, and it lasted one hour. There were twenty smugglers in the party.

February 25—Joe Davenport, an American customs officer, seriously wounded when he and two other officers routed an entire pack train of smugglers heavily loaded with liquor. After a short but severe fight the officers captured 400 quarts of liquor. Six smugglers were in

the lead of the train as it came across the river and they were followed by four horses and eight burros, all heavily laden with whiskey.

March 2—E. W. Walker, enforcement officer, mortally shot in battle on "The Island" when a small party of officers engaged nearly thirty smugglers. This fight lasted for two hours, the smugglers concealing themselves in adobe houses and trenches, from which they fired. Their losses are not definitely known. Walker died soon after the battle.

March 14—Jose Avila, smuggler, killed by prohibition officers when he and four companions refused to halt, officers claiming that the smugglers fired first. This battle also occurred on "The Island," the rum runners concealing themselves in the brush. They fled when Avila was killed, and the officers found forty quarts of whiskey near by.

March 17—Joseph E. Thomas, United States immigration officer; Corporal Kurne and Privates Koeler and Petrowski,

wounded when going to rescue of enforcement officers two miles above El Paso, just opposite "The Island." Enforcement officers saw a pack train crossing the river at that point, were refused information and opened fire, wounding three of the smugglers, who fled. The smugglers then sent to Juarez for reinforcements and the enforcement officers sent to Camp Biene for help. The battle began at 10 P. M. and lasted until daybreak. The firing was so furious that shots broke windows of a street car on the Snelter Line and traffic was stopped. However, a car was used to take soldiers from Camp Biene to the scene of the battle. Seven smugglers were known to have been wounded or killed exclusive of the first three wounded. All the smugglers, however, escaped into Mexico.

March 20—Ramon Rena, smuggler, killed by enforcement officers in the southwestern part of El Paso. Rena, in an automobile, refused to stop. He jumped from the car and ran for the river and when ordered to halt he refused and was shot. Sixty quarts of tequila were found in his car. Rena was only a chauffeur, yet his funeral procession was one of the longest ever seen in El Paso, at least a hundred automobiles filled with men and women taking part. Enforcement officers cite this incident to prove where the sentiment of the public lies.

March 21—S. E. Beckett and Arch Wood, widely known Texas enforcement officers, shot and killed on the ranch of C. P. Shearman, near El Paso, when armed with search warrants. They went to search the place for concealed liquor. Two other officers accompanied them. Only one shot was fired by the officers and the two survivors swore at the trial that the Shearman's fired first.

May 2—John Watson, prohibition enforcement officer, mortally shot in battle with liquor smugglers near Anthony, N. M. He died shortly afterward. He was formerly a Captain in the United States Army. W. B. Haskins, enforcement officer, was shot in the chin and right arm, but survived.

June 3—Juan Dominguez, smuggler, shot dead in fight between enforcement officers and rum runners. After the fight officers recovered forty quarts of tequila.

June 14—Harry Phoenix, El Paso police captain, shot and killed, and S. C. Houston, police sergeant, badly wounded by a Mexican when they were questioning him regarding liquor.

This list does not record every skirmish

between the rum runners and American officers by any means. A score of battles could be entered, but unless there were heavy casualties or much booze seized the authorities checked them up merely as "all in the day's work."

Not long before he was killed, S. E. Beckett and another officer had a running fight with smugglers, during which Beckett's automobile was pierced a dozen times with bullets. The fight was kept up by the officers, however, until the smugglers abandoned their own car, and when the two officers came up with it they recovered five gallons of alcohol, 105 quarts of whiskey and forty quarts of tequila.

Two Who Knew No Fear

Long Were Marked for Death

Wood, Beckett and Walker composed a trio for whom the smugglers had been laying for a long time, as they knew no fear, had effected many captures of smugglers and had seized larger quantities of booze than any other men in the service. In three weeks Wood himself had recovered a thousand quarts of liquor and 11,000 grains of narcotics and five of the smuggler's automobiles. He was too costly an officer to have around. He was making too big a dent in the smugglers' profits. His death was not a surprise.

"The Island," known as the smugglers' paradise, on which so many battles have occurred, is a strip containing 500 acres, twenty miles from El Paso and is in Mexican territory. In 1898 the United States dug a ditch to change the zigzag course of the Rio Grande to prevent floods and this formed the island. The old river bed marked the boundary and the tract of land, apparently on the American side, remained Mexican property and "No Man's Land." Mexicans are busy day and night fording the river when it is low, carrying liquor to the island, where it is stored in adobe houses and in trenches. This store is drawn upon to supply the demands of the American public.

Returning to the Shearman case, W. C. Guinn, former prohibition officer, who accompanied Walker and Beckett, testified at the trial that C. P. Shearman, the father, fired first, but the latter denied this, alleging that he fired in self-defense. Two El Paso undertakers testified that Walker was shot in the back of the neck. Shearman's sons, who were tried and freed, are John, Neil and Allen. More than a hun-

dred bullet holes were found in the chicken house around which the fight waged. Guinn also said he heard the father call for his son John, tell him that the officers were in the chicken house and exclaimed: "Let's smoke them out."

Walker was a brother of W. P. Walker of Fort Worth, Judge of the County Civil Court and a brother of Bert Walker, a Fort Worth attorney. He had been in the Federal service for many years.

Smuggling Well Organized

For More Than Ten Years

Smuggling has been a regular, organized trade in El Paso and along the border for the last ten years. Before the United States went dry the same individuals who now are smuggling liquors sold and carried arms and ammunition to Villistas and other Mexican insurgents at as goodly a profit as they earn at present. It is the same old gang. Court records show them up. They merely switched products, not trade.

The smugglers who made their living, a good living too, by bringing cocaine, morphine and opium across the line into this country, have switched to a large extent to the booze. The narcotic smuggling has merely decreased; it still goes on. "Hop heads" in the El Paso jail have told the authorities that many users of narcotics now bring their own "stuff" across because the men higher up, the "big men" who were wholesalers, have gone into the liquor smuggling business because of the heavy demand and large profits. None of the "wholesalers" ever has been caught.

Actually there are two "islands" the smugglers use as headquarters. One is five miles from town, and from this cache El Paso gets its supply for home consumption. The other island, the one where so many hot fights took place, twenty miles from town, is reached by a fine highway. There is a daily stream of automobiles to and from this island.

Motorists drive to the edge of the border and 200 feet away is a line of saloons where men and women, most of them Americans drink wine, beer, whiskey, tequila or any other intoxicant their fancy calls for. No passports are ever required. The cars load up with intoxicants on the return to El Paso and it is seldom that any are searched or any one is arrested. The enforcement officers say they are not after this crowd anyway, that they are after the big smugglers, the wholesalers—or were.

Penalties Are Astonishing

If They Were Applied

The few who are convicted of smuggling, the light punishment given upon conviction and the acquittal of men charged with killing enforcement officers make a startling contrast with what punishment a smuggler would receive if the law were enforced to its limit. If a smuggler were convicted on all charges and given the extreme penalties it would cost him \$77,000 and eighty-nine years in the penitentiary.

Here is what he is up against—only he isn't:

- Importation of alcoholic liquor—\$5,000 fine and five years in prison.
- Transportation of liquor into the United States—\$5,000 fine and five years.
- Concealment of smuggled liquor—\$5,000 fine and five years.
- Facilitating transportation and concealment of smuggled liquor—\$5,000 fine and five years.
- Transporting non-tax paid liquor—\$1,000 fine and two years.
- Concealing non-tax paid liquor—\$1,000 fine and two years.
- Importing bottle contrary to law—\$5,000 fine and five years.
- Facilitating transportation and concealment of smuggled bottle—\$5,000 fine and five years.
- Importing corks contrary to law—\$5,000 fine and five years.
- Facilitating transportation and concealment of smuggled corks—\$5,000 fine and five years.
- Smuggling silver leaf on neck of bottle—\$5,000 fine and five years.
- Concealing and facilitating concealment of smuggled leaf—\$5,000 fine and five years.
- Smuggling paper (the label)—\$5,000 fine and five years.
- Transporting smuggled paper—\$5,000 fine and five years.
- Concealing smuggled paper—\$5,000 fine and five years.

Besides all this the smuggler faces—only he doesn't—a charge of entering the United States without a passport at an unauthorized port of entry, for which fines aggregate \$10,000 and penalties total twenty years in prison.

All of which ought to worry the smuggler and put the force in an enforcement—but it doesn't.

Prohibition Unknown in Japan

THE blessing (or curse) of prohibition has not reached the Flowery Kingdom. Yet during nearly two months spent in Japan I did not see an intoxicated person. Sake is the national drink, but the Mikado's subjects occasionally indulge in alcoholic beverages of all kinds, and the Government derives a large revenue from the sale and regulation of both home made and imported beverages. Of the foreign beverages the most popular with the Japanese is beer, which is made by breweries at Tokyo, Yokohama, Osaka and Kobe.

A famous British Columbia brewery which was put out of business by the adoption of prohibition in Canada has moved its plant over to Japan and its product is finding favor. Beer sells from 15 to 25 cents a bottle. Other imported alcoholic products, like Scotch and rye whiskey, are sold at the rate of 20 cents a drink. Champagne and light wines, which the more prosperous Japanese drink, are about as cheap as they were in the United States before prohibition came.

Sake is made of rice and carries a mild

"kick." It is usually served hot and is not particularly palatable to the Western taste. Sake shops are numerous in both cities and villages and provide "the poor man's club," to which all classes of people resort to discuss politics and other interesting topics. American soda parlors appeal to the Japanese palate. Sundaes of various flavors are consumed in vast amounts. One soda shop in the Ginza (main street) of Tokyo sells 2,000 sundaes a day in hot weather.

Government statistics published in August show that drinking is increasing throughout the empire despite the fact that prices are double what they were in 1914. The figures for 1919 show that during that year 244,000,000 gallons of sake were sold, 26,680,000 gallons of beer and 2,400,000 gallons of wine and other beverages. The 1914 figures were 172,000,000 gallons of sake, or six gallons to each household. Statistics from Government agencies show that in 1917 there were 113,348 sake shops, 38,972 restaurants in the country, employing 52,446 geishas, 62,804 waitresses and 47,810 prostitutes.

Bridge over the Rio Grande at El Paso, Tex., one of the chief ports of entry from Mexico. Up and down the river for miles liquor smugglers make life a burden for United States enforcement agents.

